reserve base, Government have taken steps in 1989-90 to augment regional drilling efforts of Geological Survey of India (GSI). As a result of these efforts 204.65 billion tonnes of coal and 27.39 billion tonnes of lignite reserves have been currently established.

(b) Following steps have been taken to ensure efficient utilisation of coal by the power and steel units:—

i) Two washeries each for coking coal and non-coking coal benification are in advance stage of construction by Coal India Limited (CIL).

ii) Washeries are being set up by the private parties working as agent of the power stations or for direct sale to power stations.

iii) Washeries are being set up by the coal companies through private investment under Build-Own-Operate scheme.

iv) Generating companies ensure complete combustion of coal by providing adequate combustion air, proper drought in the boiler system, coal guns for flame stabilisation and maintain adequate residence time for complete combustion and reduction of unburnt carbon loss.

v) Coal Dust Injection, Stamp Charging and adoption of corex method & steel making by the steel sector.

ESI Reserve funds with RBI

*319. SHRI DIPANKAR MUKHERJEE: Will the Minister of LABOUR be pleased to state:

(a) whether ESI reserve funds are locked-up in special deposit account with Reserve Bank of India;

(b) if so, the total amount in the acount as on date;

(c) whether Government have conceded not to release the principal amount invested to ESI Corporation for high yielding investment elsewhere; and

(d) if so, the reasons thereof?

THE MINISTER OF LABOUR (SHRI M. ARUNACHALAM): (a) to (d) An amount of Rs. 2395.40 crore belonging to the ESI Corporation has been invested in the Special Deposit Account with the Reserve Bank of India. From 1992-93 the ESI Corporation has got an option to keep their fresh accretions to surplus funds in deposit with the banks. The interest on deposit held with the Government has also been made payable to the Corporation with effect from 1993-94. In January, 1997 the ESI Corporation has been permitted to withdraw past accumulations in the Special Deposit Account at the rate of Rs. 200.00 crore per annum from the year 1998-99, so as to facilitate investment of the same as per the rules.

Privatising mining of Coal

*320. SHRI PARAG CHALIHA: SHRI ALLADI P. RAJKUMAR:

Will the Minister of COAL be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have recently decided to privatise the mining of coal;

(b) if so, the justification therefor;

(c) whether Government have also decided to deregulate its pricing; and

(d) if so, justification therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COAL (SHRIMATI KANTI SINGH): (a) The Government have, subject to legislative changes, decided to offer new coal blocks, without the restriction on coal mining for captive consumption only, to the Indian Companies both in the Public and Private Sectors, on the basis of competitive bidding. The successful bidder will be free to sell coal in open market at any price negotiated between him and the consumer.